

TSORES! TSORES! TSORES!*

(From the JCRS Cure-ier)

This editorial will be a departure from the type of topic we ordinarily discuss. Shortly after this issue of Cure-ier comes out, the patient body will be without one of its most valued leaders, Vyts Beliajus. This bustling bundle of energy, cheer, humor, and common sense will be on his way to resuming an active and useful career in society. Our great loss will be society's gain. But, before he leaves we want him to know how much all of us will miss him at the JCRS. He is one of those rare personages that can visibly move and infect others with his own spirit to do things they are reluctant to do. And there is no doubt but that he not only has richly affected all of us, but has brought out the best in some of us.

Vyts has experienced a great deal of tsores in the past two years, but his will to live is so great that he has lived through all his difficulties. During the production of the Purim Shpiel, which he wrote, directed and produced, he had tsores upon tsores visited on his head. He never gave up and the result was a wonderfully entertaining evening, highlighted by his own graceful camel dance. Indeed, Vyts seems to thrive on tsores, to show at his best the stuff he and all real men of courage are made of.

While in outward appearance Vyts is very informal, his personality, radiating from his inner being attracts and overwhelms all who come in contact with him. Even when tired there is always a captivating gleam in his eye and a winning smile on his face, which reflects his goodness and sincerity. He is a prolific worker, often starting his busy day of writing, arranging meetings, and talking with the patients and staff at 5 in the morning. He never seems to tire. This is mainly due to his love for the work he is doing, especially when it involves people, whom he loves in the Platonic meaning of the word. That is, he loves people for themselves, for what they basically are, rather than for what he can get from them. His other great love is for folk dancing and every thing related to it. Indeed, he is one of the most highly respected theorists and teachers of this art. Finally, Vyts has a great aptitude for mastering languages. This has permitted him to converse with many of our foreign born patients in their native tongues. All in all, Vyts is a well-rounded person who loves to give his all in whatever activity he may be engaged..

The question that still must be answered is why he will be missed here at the JCRS. Vyts is so grateful to the JCRS for the great good they have done him in restoring his health that he feels nothing he can do to spread information about the humanitarian efforts of this place to his friends or to make the lives of those who are now here more cheerful and comfortable will be enough to repay his debt. Therefore, with great zest he has called upon his many friends and his great abilities to promote the JCRS. As president of the Council, he has waged an untiring battle to bring more "Yidishkayt" (Jewishness) among the patients (and Vyts is a Roman Catholic!) by instituting Sabbath and holiday candle lighting services, by bringing home the meaning of Khanukah and Purim with his holiday programs. He has induced many of the patients to visit those who are especially sick and receive few visitors. He has brought out the Denver folk dancers to entertain the patients on many occasions. He has written for and served on the editorial staff of the Cure-ier. He has done so much for the patients that I have never seen the patient body with as high morale as it now has. And Vyts is largely responsible for this.



Doing the Camel Dance at Spivak during the Purim Shpiel on Feb. 26, 1953. This play, written and directed by me, was a high comedy based on the Biblical story of the Book of Esther. The picture was taken after King Ahasuerus (Herbert Hyman) was married off to Esther (Harriette Melnick).

Vyts has worked tirelessly for the JCRS and the patients because he not only believes in the cause of the JCRS, but also loves people. This brilliant scholar, talented dancer, lover of people and hard-driving worker will be sorely missed by everyone, especially by those who have had close contact with him. I, for one, will never forget my association with him. Thank God that men like Vyts are born. Our hats are off to you Vyts!

— Herbert H. Hyman

* Troubles, Vargai.

VAŽIAVAU DIENĄ — I TRAVELED A DAY

Lithuanian Folk Song

I had been riding all day and all night,
I reached a meadow shining so bright.
I reached a meadow shining so bright.

Deep in that meadow, light on her sweet face,
There was a maiden working with grace.
There was a maiden working with grace.

Oh, lovely maiden, after my long way,
What joy to find you raking the hay.
What joy to find you raking the hay.

Maid, it delights me how well you can rake.
Yes, a good helpmate you'll surely make.
Yes, a good helpmate you'll surely make.

Translated by V. F. Beliajus

The LITHUANIAN SONG and DANCE

Vytautas F. Beliajus

(This article, in part, appeared in "Lietuviu Dienos" of Los Angeles, California.)

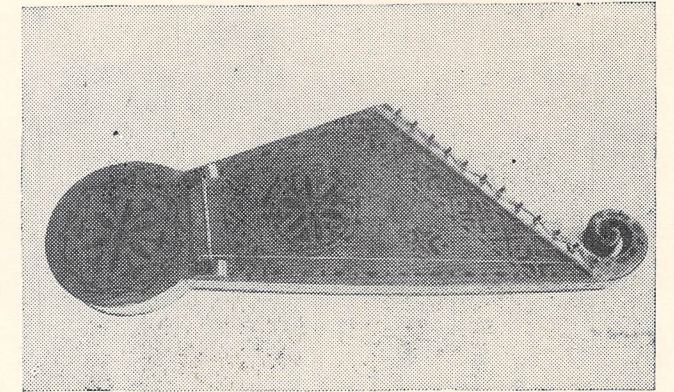
In the realm of song and dance it is the song which occupies the first place. The Lithuanian folk songs, called the "Daina," are a class of their own. A million dainos are attributed to the Lithuanians, one hundred thousand of which were recorded by Dr. Jonas Balys and others. They cover every thought and phase of life. Oddly enough, aside from the patriotic war song compositions which appeared in the twentieth century, not a single daina sings of the glories of war, but rather of its futility and its grief, of the swain who must leave his beloved maiden behind, of the maiden who bemoans her fate because of his parting for war, of the tears of the aged little mother and of the steed which returned alone.

In his daina, the Lithuanian covers every subject and object: ancient legends of gods, the creation, the stars, Mother Sun and Father Moon, the forces of nature and the spirit world, the maiden raking hay or tending her garden of rue (ruta), the swain about his steed or the even furrow he plowed, the mother about the parting with her daughter who has been given into marriage. In the songs about the flowers, the ruta occupies the first place. It is Lithuania's national flower. It also represents innocence and endurance. The care of this flower was entrusted in the hands of virgin maidens. No married woman may wear a wreath of ruta, although she may carry a sprig of it in her hands or prayer book. The parting with the wreath of rue on the wedding day is an occasion of rueful tears and sorrowful songs. Lack of care of the rue garden indicates unworthiness of the maiden. A despoiled maiden is spoken of in terms of a ruined wreath of rue. Even the tabernacles of Lithuanian Catholic church altars often have a wreath of ruta.

When singing of animals it is the piebald stallion (bėras žirgas) which occupies the first place, while among birds it is the cuckoo (gegutė), the bird of omen, which enjoys high honors. Any topic will be a subject for song and they will sing during the halving of potatoes and their planting, during harvesting, or uprooting the flax, and during the "talkas" when the flax is shiven. No activity, be it outdoors or indoors, will be complete without song. Even funerals have their share of dirges.

I can recall no picture more enchanting to my eyes, ears and soul than the summer evenings in Lietuva when the scythers, rakers and all other harvesters, returning homeward from their work in the fields, sang the airs which were carried upon the wings of gentle winds along with the scent of the rose, rue and sweet pea, while in the background, the sun was setting behind a riot of red, blue and mauve colors.

Lithuania had its share of dances, too, but running second place to the number of songs in its repertoire. Nevertheless, there were numerous dances. The reason for this is that one can't work and dance simultaneously, but one can work and sing at the same time. Dancing required cessation of work, therefore, the dancing was done on special occasions, such as holidays, feast days, weddings, christenings or upon the completion of harvest. Since the Lithuanians' life centered around the farm, his manner of thinking was likewise directed toward that end. Thus, their dances dealt mostly with farm chores:



KANKLES — A stringed instrument played by plucking and in use among the Lithuanians since Pre-Christian times. With it the VAIDYLOS (Seers-oracle men, bards) of old traveled the countryside, and to the accompaniment of its soft tones told the people their history, the deeds of their heroic leaders, sang, delivered oracles and inspired the people with courage during wars.

planting, reaping and cultivating; or about the various creatures on the ground, in the sky or waters. None are too humble to merit a song or dance, be it the grasshopper, mosquito or goat.

The Lithuanians also danced in pagan times. There are records of the Vaidelutės ("Vestal" Virgins) dancing with candles (tapers) in their hands as they tended the sacred and eternal fires on the Aukuras (altars) to the Supreme God, Perkunas (thunder), whose abode was on the high hillocks beneath ancient oak trees. There were dances into which the participation of the Laumės (fairies of good fortune) were invited. There were vigorous dances for men in which they catch descending hatchets thrown skyward to portray their prowess while courting a maiden. The name of the dance was "Kirvis" (Axe).

A circle of male dancers was formed. One girl, with axe in hand, stood in the center. All sang as men circled:

Let us dance, oh let us dance,
For the day is ours,
He who laughs and dances
To our play belongs.
Ruler of our fate, oh Goddess
Unto thee we cry.
Help us, mighty Goddess
When we need thy aid.
Let us drink, let us be joyful,
For the hour is ours,
For we know not on the morrow
How the winds may blow.
Boldly then, ye gallant lads,
Wildly swing your lass,
Lean upon her bosom,
Steal her kisses sweet.
Sister maid so young and fair
Choose amongst our flock
One to be thy mate.
Fling up the axe!
Fling up the axe!
Ho! Ho! Fling up the axe!

(From Ace M. Benedictsens's, Lithuania, The Awakening of A Nation. Copenhagen, 1895.)